THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The news item relates to 823 employees who superannuated on 29th February, 2000 as a result of the decision to roll back the age of superannuation of Indian Airlines employees from 60 to 58 years. This was in keeping with the policy of minimising manpower as initiated by the Company in 1992, and necessary for improving the Company's financial health. The decision has not affected the Company adversely since adequate trained manpower is available and limited recruitment is being done only in operational categories when essential.

Blocking of seats by travel agents in AI'S Flights

2608. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) Whether it is a fact that Air India's authorised travel agents have been "Blocking Seats" on many flights several months in advance by enlisting fictitious names;

(b) Whether it is also a fact that even Al flights show fully booked, eventually go with many seats vacant which results in a loss of revenue to the airlines; and

(c) if so, what action has been taken to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV) :

(a). and (b) The phenomenon of block bookings, especially during the peak seasons, has come to light. Bookings are required to be back up with purchase of tickets in a specified time frame. This is regularly monitored.

(c) Following additional measures have been taken with regard to reservation management :—

(i) A special Monitoring Unit has been set up to scan flights especially during the peak period and weed out block bookings.

(ii) Similar activities are being carried out by Air India field stations.

(iii) More emphasis has been laid on strict pre and post flight checks by stations to ensure that all passengers are ticketed and multiple bookings and onward/return reservations of 'no show' passengers are cancelled.

(iv) A new software Automatic Revenue Management System is being installed.